

# FLEET MAY BE HERE JULY FOURTH

If present signs be true Honolulu you ask? Shooting is what a navy is for. Of course; and in the old days real shooting was done only in time of war. A Senate committee recently has been listening to accounts of what that kind of shooting amounted to: the battle of Santiago, and some have said they did and others have said they didn't and it has been back and forth did and didn't—but let that go. The fact of importance is that the Navy no longer waits for war to learn how to shoot. Twice a year it has

Original plans were that the sixteen battleships, at present under command of Rear Admiral Thomas on account of the illness at Paso Robles of Rear Admiral Evans, together with as many more cruisers, auxiliaries and torpedo boats, would leave San Francisco about July 6 for Honolulu, en

small projectiles and bags of powder, and if you had been drilling so as not to make a false step or move and had been getting up team-work so as to do your work in the shortest possible time, where fractions of seconds count; if you had a gun crew or were a member of one where probably one-half of the men had never heard a big gun go off before and there was danger that you would go gun-shy; if for weeks and weeks you had been told to do exactly this and that and never to do that and this, and a lot of other tremendously important things had been drilled into your ears, especially matters relating to safety, and you realized that some blunder of yours might endanger not only yourself and your mates, but the ship itself; if you recalled that the Navy gives a prize to the best crew on the fleet for each kind of guns fired, and there is also a ship's prize for the best work of these guns, and that if you did your work well and won out there would be from \$20 to \$50, or possibly more, for yourself and each of your mates; if you knew how one gun's crew bets it will beat its rival; if you knew how every man on every ship is intensely eager to get the Naval trophy in shooting for his own ship, so that all hands can put on proper airs and say in a deprecating way: 'Of course we were glad to get the trophy, but it was nothing, mere nothing; why we could beat it all to pieces in a fight, but of course, we don't want to brag; if you could see these men working overtime of their own volition in the Morris tube training, the miniature target shooting that is practised daily on the ships, you'd begin to realize how a ship gets all wrought up over this target practice.

"Just before the shooting begins a calm, a stillness comes over the ship. A steady themselves with a supreme effort to keep cool; the ship ceases to be dangerously near a madhouse; everyone girds up his loins and spits on this hands, metaphorically speaking, and the spirit of the ship is in the possession of the ship, and as the guns go bang, bang, and boom, boom, you'd think these officers and men had done nothing else all their lives but shoot off projectiles and it was as much a matter of course with them as getting their breakfast. All hands are now smiling and good cheer pervades every compartment, and its 'That's fine, Bill!' 'Hit 'em again!' 'Sack it to 'em!' 'Soak 'er!' 'You're doin' great!' Never mind, that's only one miss! Bully boy!' and the like.

"But it is time to shoot. Every one now is calm and eager to begin. The boom and three launches and two boats' crews go out and put up the first targets. The ship gets under way and steams about slowly until she gets the proper headway of a predetermined speed. The men at the targets set them up and steam away to a buoy a quarter of a mile from the target. Slowly the ship swings out and comes on the range, just grazing the buoys that mark the path. The men are at the guns. The outward buoy is passed and then the ship approaches the first buoy, where the firing is to begin. The exact range of that point is known. The elevation of the gun is known, as is also the deflection. You know the sights have to be right on the target, but the gun itself has to be aimed a little to one side, so as to account for the side movement of the projectile, due to the ship's motion, as it flies through the air. What is called fire control determines just how much the gun must be elevated and how much it must be deflected at a certain instant. There is a man at the gun who turns little wheels and adjusts gauges, and he gets word from some one else just what to do and when to do it. Never mind how this is communicated to him.

"Meantime one man has been training the gun sideways and another has been raising or lowering it, independently of the man who has been setting the deflection and fixing the range. When the cross-wires in the gun-pointer's telescope are right on the bullseye and it is time to fire he pulls a trigger and the electrical apparatus sends a lightning impulse into the powder, there is a roar, a thin cloud of smoke from the primer, a flash and you look for the splash to see if it is a hit.

"As the ship proceeds along the base of the triangle the deflection and range have to be changed constantly. The change is greatest at the ends of the run. Along about the center, when you are just opposite the target, the changes are slight, but it is just as hard to hit the target. All these changes are matters of fractions of seconds. It is not deliberate work, but it is done carefully and there is where the element of training comes in.

"The first roar of a gun sends a thrill through the ship. The man who has fired it is nervous. If it's a miss he steadies himself at once. Rare is it that the second shot is a miss. The gun-shy part of that man's career is over. He is now as cool as if he were whistling Yankee Doodle. Bang and crack go his shots. Perhaps the gases obscure his vision to some extent. He waits an instant from time to time before he fires. Pump, pump, goes the trigger. He's got the range, he's got his nerve, he knows when he hits and when he misses. It's a big contest and his tools of trade are the confined elements of destruction with the accumulated scientific skill of decades behind him, and the result depends upon his clear vision and steady hand. The task inspires him, his face is drawn tense, he forgets everything else. He becomes

part of that machine of destruction, an automaton.

## SPECTACULAR NIGHT SHOOTING.

"The most spectacular part of the shooting is with the smallest and biggest guns. The small guns are shot at night. Great black targets with white centers are put up and then your own ship, or possibly another anchored near, illuminates the targets with four or five great searchlights. The guns boom and soon a little curlew of light is seen curving through the air. It is what is called a tracer, a chemical set on fire by the redhot projectile as it flies. You see it hit the target and then in the rays of the lights you see a splash.

"Then the light goes curving up into the air and you know the projectile is ricocheting. Down it comes. There is another leap and flight, and then another and another, and far off, two or three miles away, it disappears. The projectile has made its last jump. So fast are the small guns fired that frequently from five to ten of these rockets are leaping and jumping toward the sky and curving back into the black water. It is beautiful fireworks.

"Although the small guns are fired at night, some of them are fired in the day time. The string of these guns is run off first. No noise of a gun is quite so disturbing as that of the three-inch weapons. You may stuff your ears full of cotton and nearly every one on ship does that—but the terrible crack smites through it and gives you a jolt. The deck feels an earthquake tremor, and you are glad when the ship goes off the range. But this is getting ahead of the story. Suppose the ship has just passed the outer buoy. Steadily she approaches the first firing one. Soon word is passed:

"'Buoy on the bow!'

"The umpires have their watches in hand, the crew prepares to load. Now the buoy is abeam. A red flag goes up to the forward yardarm, the whistle blows, and then the command from the officer in charge is heard:

"'Commence firing!'

"That is all the command that is given. For the small guns a given number of shots must be fired as quick-

and the work, second by second, every fix things up generally. Then comes another start for the range and so on and energy of the men in their supreme effort.

"'Every shot a hit!' cries one of the crew exultingly.

"'What was the time?' asks another.

"'So many seconds,' says the umpire.

"'That beats all records!' shouts another.

There are cheers and then there are cheers and those hits. You can see the projectiles great rejoicings. After the first fire as they near the target, needle-like scarcely a man hears the noise of the

TEAM WORK AT THE GUNS.

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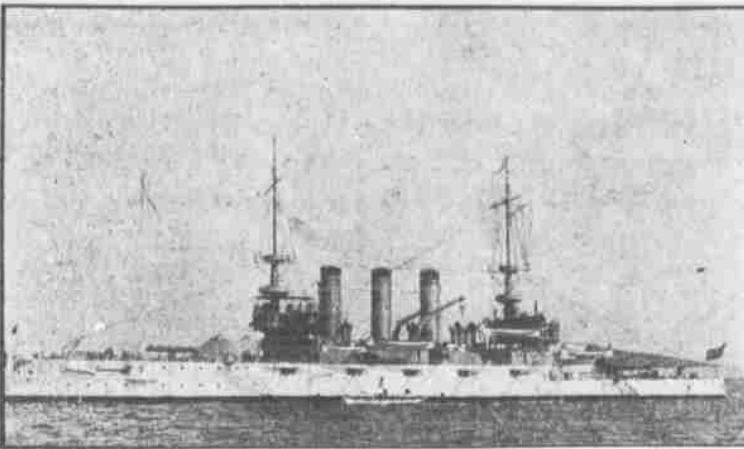
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U. S. BATTLESHIP TYPE OF THE MAINE, THE MISSOURI AND THE OHIO.

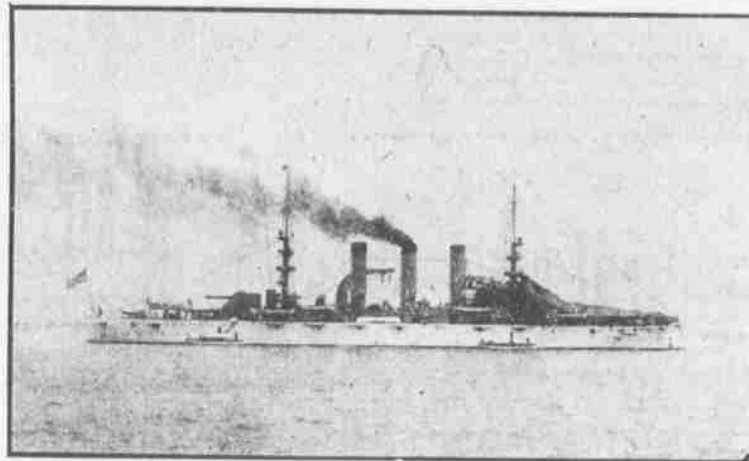
route to New Zealand, Australia, China, Japan and the Philippines, but the latest talk has it that, in order to fulfill plans for the return East of at least a portion of the big fleet, the sixteen men-of-war and those vessels which accompany them, will have to leave San Francisco about June 20, which would bring them to Honolulu in time to be entertained on Independence Day.

In this event never before will Honolulu have enjoyed so great a distinction and the people of this city will have on their hands the greatest reception scheme experienced in the history of the islands, a proposition likely to exceed anything to come for a great many years.

AT MAGDALENA BAY. "When Admiral Evans' fleet arrived in Magdalena Bay two days ahead of schedule time," a correspondent on board the Louisiana wrote, "there was undoubtedly a sense of relief in official circles in Washington over what was practically the termination of the long cruise to the Pacific, and also one of gratification because the ships, as Admiral Evans notified the Navy Department, were in better condition than when they left Hampton Roads and ready for any duty within an hour's notice.

"On the fleet there was no sense of relief over the safe and prompt arrival. That was taken as a mere matter of course. It is true every one was a little proud over the performance of the fleet and glad that it had shaken itself into a homogeneous unit and was in first-class fighting condition, not as separate battleships but as a fleet. In the matter of cruising the fleet at last was as one ship and lots of useful things had been learned.

"On the ships the arrival was marked by just the opposite feeling from relief and gratification. The officers and men frankly were not in a placid state of mind. All were under an intense tension. They were what might be called wrought up. What, you say, American men-of-war men in a nervous condition—one that actually showed itself in their work and their play? No, not in their play, for there wasn't any. Well, but sea fighters nervous? Not a mother's son of 'em would admit such a thing. Preposterous! Men with nerves on war ships? Well, perhaps not nerves as the ordinary person speaks of these anatomical cut-ups, but



U. S. BATTLESHIP TYPE OF THE GEORGIA, THE MINNESOTA, THE NEW JERSEY AND THE RHODE ISLAND.

what would seem to be slam-bang work, but what is really the result of months, and even years, of scientific training of the eye and hand and of the mind in knowing just when to pull a trigger or snap a lanyard at exactly the right fraction of a second.

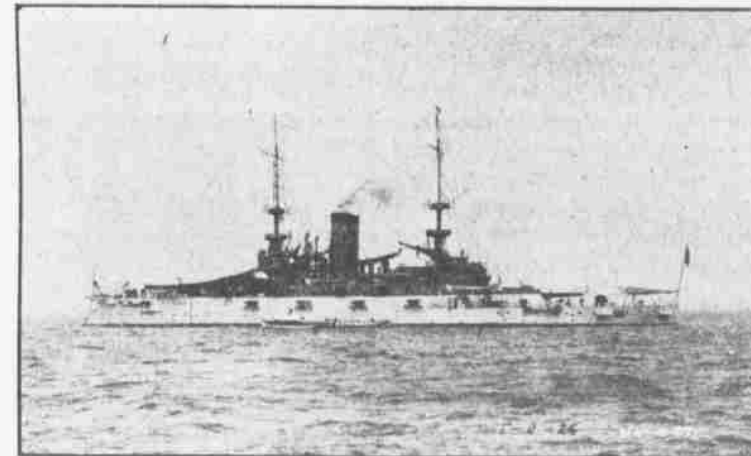
"You see, the secret of success in fighting on the sea, as it is practically in every kind of fighting, lies in the last analysis, in what the Western man calls 'getting the drop on the other fellow.' The way to get that drop on war ships is to find out the men who can shoot straightest and fastest and can keep their nerve, and then be prepared to turn 'em loose when war comes. The target practice here has

great day approaches everyone is as much under a severe strain as a trained university football team approaching the great game of the season. Team-work has been the aim of the drills. To pretend to be cool and utterly unconcerned is the little game of by-play that is going on.

EVERYONE ON EDGE. "As the day comes on you don't hear much levity about the ship. The time of the grouch is at hand. Why, even the officers can hardly be civil to one another, and as for the men, they get saying things to one another in their disputes and heat and anxiety that would make a stranger think they were dangerously near an uprising. The ordnance officer loses all his friends and the division officers glare at him and one another as if each felt sorry that the earth in general and the ship in particular was encumbered with such pitiful specimens of humanity.

"Now and then they get to telling one another what they think of things, not meaning a word of it, and some times a dispute goes clear up to the Captain for him to decide. He does decide it gravely, and perhaps when the disputants leave he turns away and smiles as he recalls that men are but children of larger growth, and after all he's glad to see these things come up because it shows how hard and earnestly everyone is working and bending all his energies to be first. Be first! Be first! That's the thought of everyone, and all these bickerings, sharp-tongued retorts, objections, suggestions, sullen looks—yes, even drawn faces—mean that every ounce of energy, of intensity that the men on the ship have is being expended in the task at hand.

"When you see all this you can understand why the men of a seven-inch gun's crew, for example, who think they have what they call a look-in for the Navy prize, elect to sleep beside their pet gun all night, just as a stable boy sleeps in the stall of his great



U. S. BATTLESHIP TYPE OF THE ALABAMA AND THE ILLINOIS.

ly as possible. For the big guns as many shots may be fired as possible within a certain number of minutes. The shots are counted carefully for the small guns, and when the given quota is fired the order is given:

"'Cease firing!'

"When the time limit has expired for the big guns a whistle is blown by the umpire who has the watch and the same command is given, but the crew has the right to fire one more shot within a given number of seconds so as to discharge any projectile that may have been in the gun when the cease-firing command was given.

## THE CREATION OF GEYSERS.

"As soon as the command to fire is given intense activity starts. Crack

goes the three-pounder or three-inch. Then comes the splash. A geyser jumps up out of the bay. Then another and another, as the projectile hits the water. These geysers look as if Old Faithful of the Yellowstone had been brought down to give a special performance. The spurts are not in a straight line, for the curvature of a small wave deflects the course of the projectile and sends it careening this way or that. You can tell the position of the spurt whether it was hit or not and you can count the hits and misses carefully. You forget the ear-smiting cracks of the guns and the jolt of the decks. Did he make a hit? Is what you want to know, and is the pointer doing his work well